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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 28 February 1992 from the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to forward to you the following documents signed by the Presidents of the South Cone Countries in the summit meeting held at Canela, Brazil on 20 February 1992: (a) Declaration of Canela and (b) document on the Joint Position of the South Cone Countries regarding the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (see annex).

We request that the text of the present letter and its annex be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 80 of the preliminary list and brought to the attention of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at its fourth session.

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ANNEX

Declaration of Canela

We, the Presidents of the Southern Cone Countries, meeting at Canela, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, on 20 and 21 February 1992, to review the agenda items of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, have adopted the following declaration:

Declaration of Canela by the Presidents of the Southern Cone Countries prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

1. The environmental crisis threatens survival on Earth. We are living in an ecosystem whose balance is essential for all humanity. The protection of the environment and the rational conservation of natural resources require a firm commitment by all nations of the world to work in concert in order to ensure for future generations the continuance of the conditions that make life possible on our planet.

2. We fully accept this common responsibility, aware that participation in its fulfilment will differ because countries have contributed differently to causing environmental problems and there are differences in the availability of financial and technological resources. The effort which the developing countries must make requires the input of new, additional, continuing financing under especially favourable conditions and the transfer of environmentally sound technology on the most advantageous terms, in keeping with the different capabilities of the developed and developing countries.

3. Development must be at the heart of all action to reverse the steady degradation of the environment. Such action should come to grips not only with the symptoms but also, basically, with the causes of the problems. To achieve their objectives fully, multinational environmental programmes must properly define responsibilities, respect the sovereignty of nations under international law and bring about an interdependence that will guarantee equitable benefits to all parties.

4. Since we are convinced of the need to take joint action, it is fruitless to limit ourselves to attributing responsibility for damage done to the environment in the past, without drawing an instructive lesson from the experiences we have undergone. It is essential to agree immediately on formulas to which we all subscribe which will prevent the repetition of depredatory behaviour, uproot forever selfish or unscrupulous attitudes and ensure that projects make provision for adequate assessment of their environmental impact.

5. The international community has understood that the protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources are not obstacles to

material progress and economic development. On the contrary, they are complementary concepts, because goods cannot continue to be produced if natural resources are not protected. We need a renewed system of international cooperation that will bring about an environmentally sound planet that is at the same time a socially and economically just world. The essential is qualitative growth, a sustainable development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the options of those to come. Rather than engaging in recriminations, the international community must direct its efforts to adopting the means to sustainable development.

6. We reaffirm the importance of education and of training the public to be aware and responsible when it comes to all the problems of the environment. Participation by the community, by community leaders, by young people, non-governmental organizations and the media, must be encouraged so as to spread the knowledge and the practice of environmentally sound patterns of conduct.

7. The strengthening of the scientific and technological infrastructures in the developing countries and the cooperation of the developed countries in disseminating and transferring technologies that are environmentally the most sound, modern and appropriate are part and parcel of this common effort to defend and protect the environment.

8. The understandings reached on achieving the proposed goals require also the elaboration, progressive development and gradual codification of international environmental law. In addition to the laws adopted by each State, it will be necessary to conclude and improve international legal instruments covering the resources in their entirety, the resources belonging to more than one State, and the interrelationship of acts affecting them. Such international instruments must further include, among other provisions, those establishing environmental monitoring systems and systems for ongoing cooperation to deal with climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, natural disasters and other environmental threats. The Rio Conference must decide to frame a Convention codifying international environmental law, which will lay down the principles, determine the duties of States and of individuals and corporations, specify international responsibility in the matter and establish a way of putting this responsibility into effect in sanctioning ecologically illicit conduct.

9. We consider that the market economy has machinery which, if used efficiently, can encourage rational environmental behaviour and discourage behaviour that scientific research has shown to be harmful. However, market forces are not sufficient by themselves to establish sustainable development. Commercial transactions must include the environmental costs incurred at the production stage, without transferring them to future generations. We again state our opposition to maintaining systems of subsidies that not only misdirect production and distort market conditions but also tend to give respectability to practices that despoil natural resources.

10. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has the highest priority. The Rio Conference is a unique historic opportunity that must not be missed if we are to initiate a new stage of international cooperation that result in an intensified transfer of financial resources and technology. In union with the other Latin American and Caribbean countries, with whom in March 1991 we adopted the Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development, we shall seek in Rio de Janeiro to achieve a solid basis for an international agreement leading all States without exception to achieve sustainable development and to take joint action in defence of the environment.

11. We affirm our intention to maintain regular contacts between our Governments concerning environment and development, both before and after the Rio Conference, and to use the most appropriate means to implement and apply our common action in the field. In particular, these contacts will be used to study the technical and economic feasibility of establishing, with the support of the competent international agencies, a regional network for the observation of stratospheric ozone, which will make it possible to monitor, in the necessary detail, the changes taking place in the ozone layer.

12. The meeting at Canela of the Presidents of the Southern Cone Countries and the meeting at Manaus of the Presidents of the Amazon Countries, held at the invitation of the Government of Brazil, testify clearly to the political will of the South American countries to establish common positions to ensure the success of the Rio Conference.

The following document of positions will guide the delegations of our countries in the negotiations prior to the Rio Conference.

APPENDIX

Joint position of the Southern Cone Countries prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

I. PROTECTION OF THE ATMOSPHERE

1. Global climate change, a result primarily of excess gas emissions caused by the burning of fossil fuels, will have profound implications on the economic development of our countries. Similarly, the harmful effects of the destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer and of transboundary air pollution are cause for concern.

2. It is necessary to stabilize the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases. This will require the monitoring, limitation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, internationally agreed to on the basis of parameters ensuring increased energy supplies in developing countries, in conjunction with the adoption of policies promoting efficient energy, industry, agriculture and transportation.

3. The negotiations on a framework convention on climate change offer a unique opportunity for the international community to achieve balanced commitments, which will necessarily differ in the case of the developed and the developing countries. The developed countries must assume a clear obligation to stabilize and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

4. The depletion of the ozone layer is a phenomenon that affects the countries of the Southern Cone of South America in particular. It is of fundamental importance that there should be the widest possible participation in the revised Montreal Protocol and full implementation of the measures agreed upon at the meeting of States Parties in London, above all with respect to the new and additional financial resources contributed to the Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol. The developed countries must swiftly implement conversion measures with a view to halting the depletion of the ozone layer. Moreover, it will be necessary to examine the adverse effects of depletion of the ozone layer and the likely extent of depletion in the future. It will also be necessary to find ways of limiting and mitigating damage caused by depletion and adequately compensating those adversely affected.

5. It is important to adopt measures to promote sounder use of fossil fuels and the development of technology to reduce the harmful impact of the use of such fuels on the atmosphere. Both developed and developing countries must formulate policies that will facilitate the adoption of consumption patterns and lifestyles based on sounder and more efficient energy use.

II. BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

1. Immediate steps must be taken to promote the conservation and sound exploitation of biological diversity. Biological resources are unquestionably natural resources of each individual country, and as such they are subject to national sovereignty. There must be cooperation between the developed countries and countries with a wealth of biological resources, particularly with a view to strengthening local institutions. National efforts in the areas of research, data collection, monitoring, and maintaining gene banks should be supported by the international community. It is important to recognize the right of the countries with greater biological diversity to the heritage constituted by such diversity, particularly as regards genetic resources, in respect of which it is essential to set up and respect appropriate registration, regulation and control systems. Conservation of biological diversity must be of an integral nature, with an emphasis on protected areas and areas established through economic and ecological zoning.

2. There is an intrinsic relationship between biological diversity and biotechnology, which offers one of the clearest opportunities for sustainable development. It is important to recognize the essential link between access to resources derived from biodiversity and free access to the resulting technology and the technology required for the conservation of biodiversity.

3. The use of biotechnology in the conservation and use of germ plasm for agricultural purposes, the improvement of cultivated species and the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices are essential activities that must benefit from extensive international cooperation.

III. SOIL DEGRADATION AND DESERTIFICATION

1. The international community must as a matter of urgency take action to prevent and reverse the growing process of soil degradation and desertification, as well as to eliminate the multiple causes of the process in question, which are a threat to human welfare and to food security. The Rio Conference will be an opportunity to give thought to constraints over the past two decades on the functioning of international anti-desertification machinery, as well as to adopt decisions with a view to revitalizing and strengthening such machinery.

2. It is essential to draw up a land-use strategy taking account of both environmental factors and development potential, based on scientific and technological progress and supported by international programmes and remunerative prices for agricultural products on a market free of distortions caused by subsidies and various types of barriers. The importance of preventive and corrective action in areas set aside for conservation must be acknowledged. It is essential, however, that such measures should also be implemented in areas suitable for production. Economic and ecological zoning is a particularly suitable instrument for achieving such ends.

IV. FORESTS

The economic exploitation of forest resources, which is a sovereign right of States, can and must be made compatible with protection of the environment, since forests, particularly native forests, are areas in which biological diversity is concentrated, that constitute carbon sinks, and that are an important factor in soil and water resources conservation. The sound use of forests calls, inter alia, for remunerative prices and market access for forest products on terms facilitating their sustainable development. In addition to the purely environmental aspects of forests, it is essential to recognize the importance of forests as economic, social and cultural areas, whose individual components form an indivisible, complex whole. Forest policies must take account of the fact that forests are a habitat for human populations, whether indigenous or non-indigenous, which depend on the forests for their livelihood.

V. WATER RESOURCES

1. According to the recently adopted Dublin Statement, on water and sustainable development, the quality of human life is closely linked to sufficient freshwater supplies of appropriate quality; consequently, goals must be set, programmes must be established and ways and means must be identified within a certain time-frame. Environmentally sound water resources management is a key component of the conservation of ecosystems and of the promotion of both individual and collective human development.

2. Integrated water resources management is therefore essential for the promotion of sustainable development. National and regional measures for the regulation, conservation and integrated management of hydrographic basins are essential for the exploitation of water resources for productive activities, for environmental risk control and for health protection. Similarly, control of pollutants and the adoption of measures to eliminate environmental threats are tools for such development.

VI. ENVIRONMENT

1. The health of the oceans as climate regulators and their role as carbon sinks should be a constant concern of the international community.

2. The degradation of marine and coastal resources resulting from their uncontrolled exploitation and marine and land pollution represents a serious challenge for the coastal countries that depend on such resources for their economic and social development. Marine pollution must be effectively reduced and rules must be established for the rational regulation of the use of oceans in order to protect the marine environment. In view of the integral nature of the marine ecosystem, fishing activities, both in exclusive economic zones as well as on the open sea, must be carried out in accordance with sustainable practices that are ecologically consistent with the rational and optimum use of hydrobiological resources.

VII. TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTES

1. The forthcoming entry into force of the Basel Convention, whose first conference of parties is to be held in Uruguay, is an auspicious event for controlling the transboundary transit of such wastes, which should be complemented through the establishment of effective compliance - verification mechanisms, requiring personnel training and the available means of monitoring. The development of the liability regime provided for under the Convention is essential in order to ensure its effectiveness. There is also a need for an agreement within the framework of the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London, 29 December 1972) in order to ensure the total prohibition of the dumping of hazardous, toxic and radioactive wastes into the oceans.

2. States involved in the export of hazardous wastes must undertake a clear commitment with regard to the environmentally sound management of such wastes. This requires reducing transboundary movements of wastes to a minimum consistent with their efficient and environmentally sound management. It is also necessary to minimize the amount and toxicity of the hazardous wastes generated and ensure their environmentally sound storage or disposal as close as possible to the source of generation.

VIII. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

1. The problems affecting quality of life in human settlements are becoming global in nature in so far as their impact transcends national boundaries and acutely affects most of the countries in the world. In the last 20 years, the industrialized countries have generally brought about a notable improvement in the living conditions in their cities by means of sound investments and new technology. In the developing countries, on the other hand, the problems are reaching critical levels with serious and unforeseeable consequences.

2. Cities constitute the main centres of economic activity in developing countries. Nevertheless, they have shown their inability to meet in a satisfactory manner the basic needs of a large number of their inhabitants. Satisfying those needs entails dealing as a matter of priority with the problems linked to access to basic services, particularly drinking water supply and management of domestic and industrial wastes, housing, urban security, energy, transport and education.

3. International cooperation in environmental matters must necessarily give particular emphasis to eliminating poverty. In this connection, greater attention must be given to rural settlements.

IX. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

1. As a result of the trade liberalization process promoted by the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), resources which are now being used to maintain protectionist production practices must be made subject to more coherent policies that are consistent with sustainable development. Environmental protection rules must be oriented towards their specific objectives, without constituting discriminatory practices or hidden trade barriers. The viability of sustainable development also entails the existence of an international climate that favours growth by all countries, especially developing countries. In particular, this involves a transition towards international equity, including cooperation with developing countries in accordance with their national development objectives, priorities and plans. In this regard, new and additional financial resource flows under suitable conditions for developing countries are necessary to enable them to fulfil the obligation to protect the environment and promote development.

2. It is essential to set up a mechanism capable of implementing the Agenda 21 action programmes and ensure that the multilateral legal instruments that are being negotiated also include suitable financial mechanisms for achieving their objectives. In this regard, existing financial sources, including the so-called Global Environment Facility, are inadequate and can only make a limited contribution to fulfilling the major commitments concerning the environment and development which will be undertaken at the Rio Conference and in the negotiations on biological diversity and climate change.

X. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

1. The strengthening of national institutions, the establishment or streamlining of regional mechanisms and international cooperation are essential aspects of sustainable development.

2. It is essential to undertake efforts to ensure increasing coordination of economic policies and plans with environmental protection strategies. This should be one of the most innovative achievements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The harmonization of economic and environmental activities should be reflected at both the level of countries as well as that of international organizations.

3. Imaginative approaches that are global in scope must be found in order to provide the United Nations with more efficient and effective mechanisms for carrying out the decisions on sustainable development that will emerge from

the Conference. Its programme actions must be planned and executed with the complete participation of the developing countries in order to ensure that such actions are in keeping with their real priorities.

Canela, 20 February 1992

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(Signed) Fernando COLLOR
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

(Signed) Patricio AYLWIN AZOCAR
President of the Republic of Chile

(Signed) Andrés RODRIGUEZ
President of the Republic of Paraguay

(Signed) Luis Alberto LACALLE
President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay